

BOOK REVIEW

SAUL JARCHO, *A Plain Treatise on the Peruvian Bark* ("The Stanitz Manuscript"): A Late Seventeenth or Early Eighteenth Century Anonymous Manuscript Account of the Jesuits' Bark Published in its Original Latin Text with a Translation, Introduction, and Notes. Boston, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, 1992. \$19.95. ISBN 0-88135-176-8. (Science History Publications/USA, Canton, MA)

DR. JARCHO has transcribed the Latin manuscript and translated into English an anonymous, probably student, *precis* describing exactly how Peruvian bark—cinchona—was used to treat quartan malaria in Italy at the cusp of the 18th century. The nameless author on whose lectures this *precis* is based was clearly an observant physician whose conclusions about cinchona's action and indications are solidly based on clinical experience, including fevers for which bark was not effective and problems with adulteration not really resolved by western pharmacists until the last quarter of the 19th century.

How was Jesuits' bark, one of the first reliable and specific drugs to enter our pharmacopeia, given in 1700? Three hours before the chill of quartan malaria was due, bark powdered finely enough to pass through a flour sieve was given in a single dose of about 4 grams (in the range of what Dunglison recommended in 1846) in 120 ml of undiluted wine to the patient who was kept in bed. This dose was intended to prevent only the impending attack, not the second or third. What are probably symptoms of overdose are described.

The author successfully uses a scholastic question-and-answer pedagogic technique and consistently refers to bodily fluids as *humores* without thereby accepting the medieval humoral pathology. The English translation reads smoothly, but Dr. Jarcho need not have queried his translation of *lotia* as urine: this is certainly correct, and fresh urine (actually sterile in healthy patients and with a small amount of urea) was a rational vehicle to clear wax from the external ears.

This elegant little volume deals masterfully with one issue, and is as refreshing as it is welcome.

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